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MR. GEORGE A. KESSLER'S BACHELOR APARTMENTS.

BY WILLIAM R. BRADSHAW.



SUALLY the possession of practically unlimited wealth, a natural affinity for beauty, and a pleasant and cultivated taste, is one of the choicest situations to be found on this mundane sphere. What visions of splendor will awaken in the mind of the lucky individual possessing such admirable conditions of human delight! To possess an intoxicating thirst for the coveted object, and to have abundant means for obtaining same, may well render a man impregnable to "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

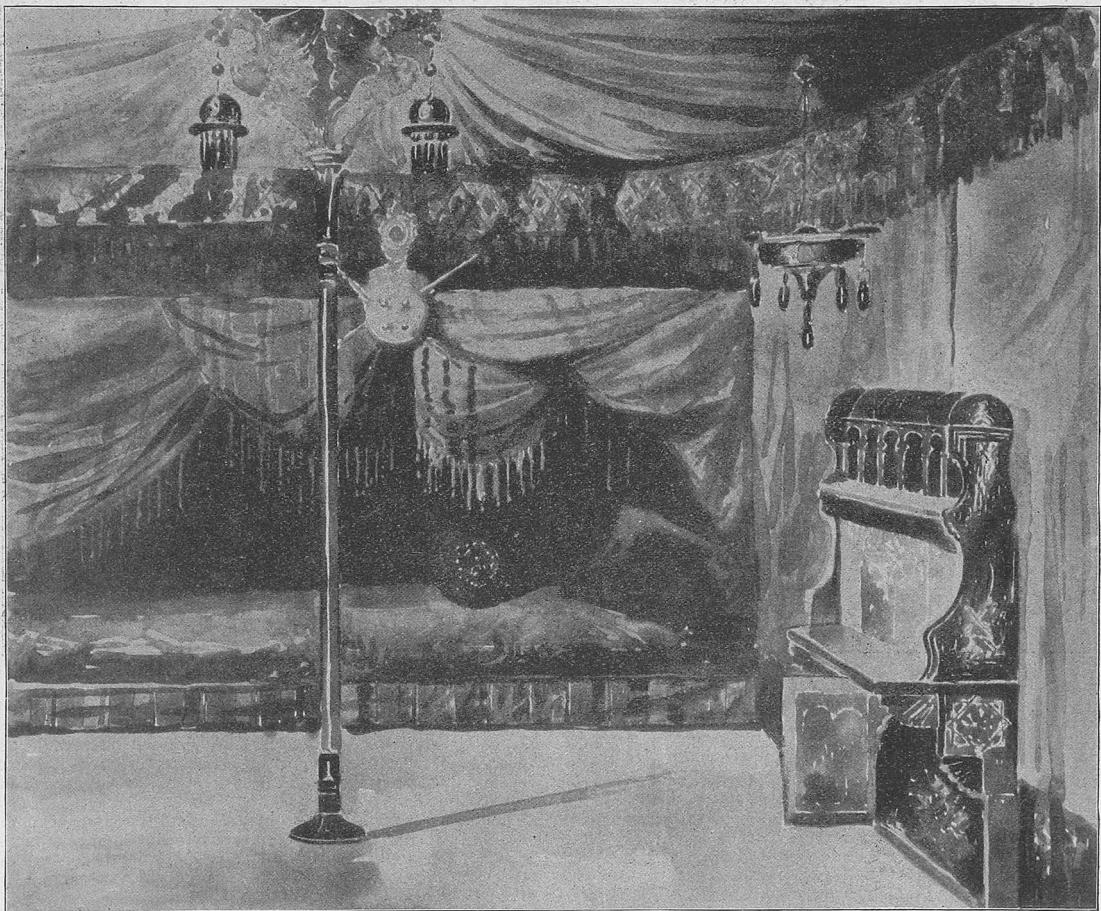
The fortunate possessor of the beautiful *fin de siècle* furnishings we are about to describe is Mr. George A. Kessler, of this city, senior member of the large importing house of Kessler, Behringer & Co., representing the famous champagne wines of Möet & Chandon, is a man of this ilk, who has collected in his elegant bachelor apartments on Fifth avenue such an array of beautiful and costly furnishings as are calculated to make his home the Mecca of decorative art pilgrims from all over the country.

PARLOR.

This fine apartment is a veritable treasure house, provided

not merely with the most elegant of divans, easy chairs, cabinets, and other belongings considered essential to a well-furnished apartment, but is also the sanctuary of many costly *objets d'art*, collected by the owner during his travels in Europe and elsewhere. There is a magnificent Sevres vase, standing on an onyx pedestal. The mantelpiece is flanked on both sides by electric lamps supported by artistically wrought gilt bronze standards mounted on columns of onyx. The mantelpiece itself is a richly carved structure in wood, decorated in cream and gold, which are the prevailing colors of the apartment, the overmantel being a French mirror, reflecting in its depths the wonderfully fine collection of articles of *vertu* disposed upon the mantel shelf. Prominent among these is a magnificent trophy in carved ivory representing a feast of Bacchus. Our illustrations of the apartment, as a whole, gives an excellent view of the mantelpiece.

The most conspicuous object in the parlor is the half life-sized figure in white marble of The Ballet Girl, by the Italian sculptor, A. Frille, of Florence, which stands on a black marble pedestal. We present a fine view of this charming work of art, showing the white and gold piano in the background, beside which stands a piano lamp having a wonderfully constructed lamp shade composed of silken ruffles. The end of the apartment contains the entrance doorway and the doorway leading into the bathroom, both of which are draped with old gold velour portières with embroidered decoration of crowns and garlands of pearls and precious stones. Between these stands a richly carved gilt music cabinet, and the two corners of the



THE ARABIAN ROOM IN MR. GEORGE A. KESSLER'S APARTMENTS, NEW YORK CITY.
(FROM THE ARTIST'S ORIGINAL DESIGN.)

apartment are occupied with corner cabinets, containing the most unique and costly collection of pictures in pearl in existence.

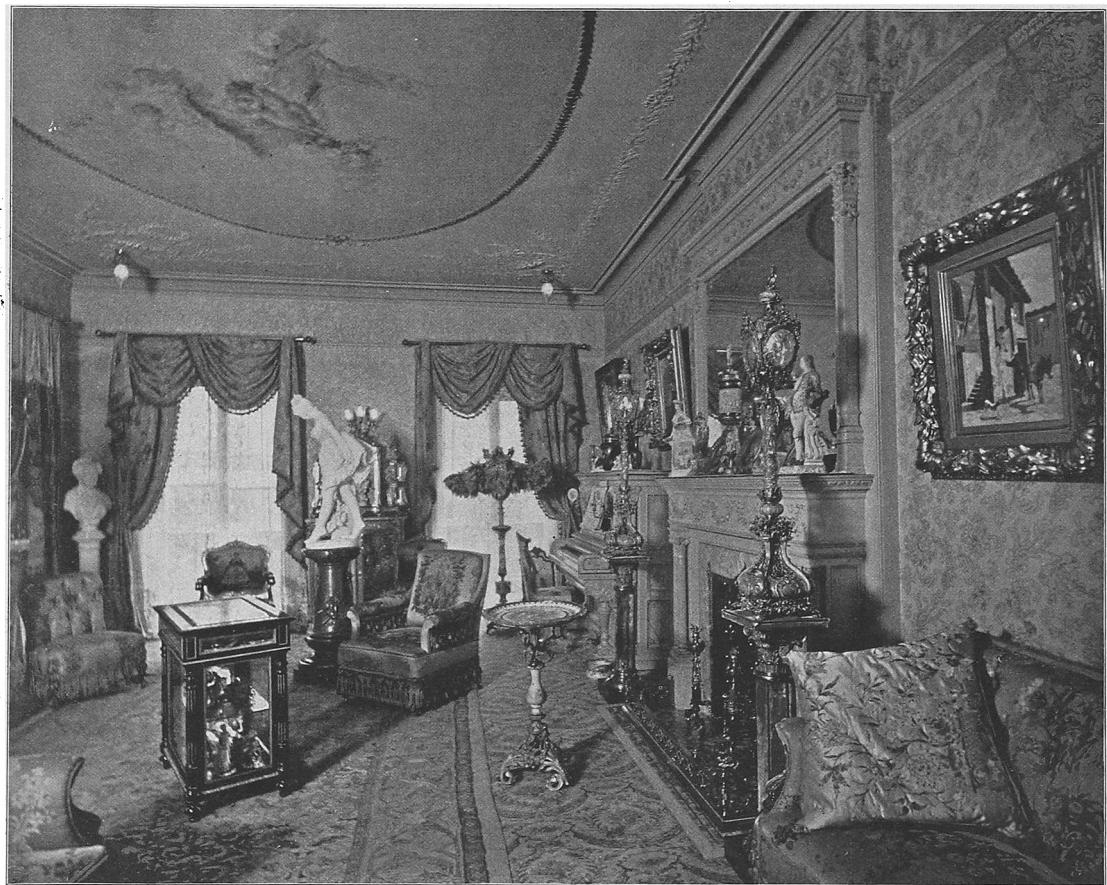
Pearls, as seen in jewelry, are so familiar that one is apt to think of them but vaguely as the product of the pearl oyster, and little thought is given to the causes which unite to produce them, or to the marvelous development of these daintiest of all jewels. A few words describing their formation may therefore prove interesting.

When the large pearl oyster (*Meleagrina margaritifera*) is lying on the bottom of the sea, his beautiful shells parted to permit the influx of the food particles which are brought to him by the tides and currents, he is liable to receive unwelcome substances, such as small shellfish, grains of sand, or bits of seaweed. These he usually ejects by the muscles and fibers

on the inside, all showing the beautiful rainbow hues of the natural iridescence of the shells, were of such strange and singular forms that it occurred to him that they might be utilized by an artist to bring out some animal or human form. It was simply necessary to paint gauze wings on a pearl formation shaped like a caterpillar to give it the appearance of a magnificent silvery dragon fly. An elliptical one was readily furnished with fins and tail, and at once became a pearl "whale." Mermaids, with protruding breasts and symmetrical bodies, birds and other creatures, were skillfully painted on the insides of the curious shells, and each one of them became a work of art.

Of the two plaques of pearl here illustrated the first represents a beautiful figure of Venus, borne through the water by two sea gods, which makes a very pretty and interesting picture.

Two pearls form the breasts of this figure. The second repre-



"THE PARLOR MANTELPIECE IS A RICHLY CARVED STRUCTURE IN WOOD, DECORATED IN CREAM AND GOLD, FLANKED ON BOTH SIDES BY ELECTRIC LAMPS, SUPPORTED BY ARTISTICALLY WROUGHT GILT BRONZE STANDS, MOUNTED ON COLUMNS OF ONYX."
(EXECUTED BY HERTZ BROS.)

which form his natural protection from such intruders. But occasionally an obstinate particle resists all attempts at ejection, and, remaining, causes a constant irritation of the delicate substance of the oyster's flesh.

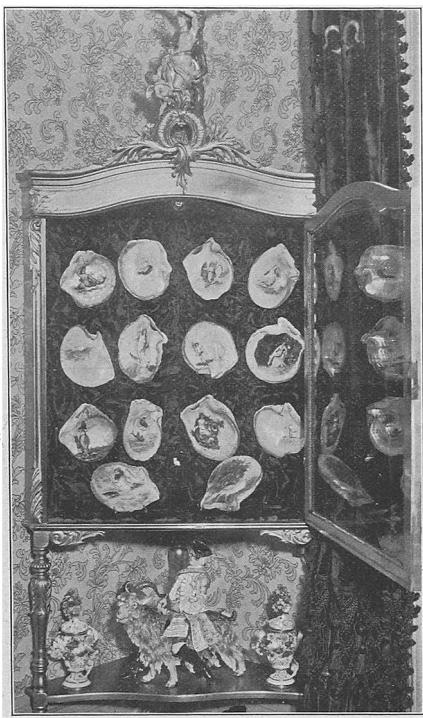
Unable to rid himself of the foreign body, he proceeds to render it innocuous by covering it with nacre, or carbonate of lime—the smooth substance of which his own iridescent shell is made—and thus a pearl is formed.

The two illustrations of pearl shells printed herewith are specimens from this wonderful collection, which was gathered by a lover of pearls during a period of thirty years, and procured by Mr. Kessler at an enormous cost. The protuberances

sents a large pouter pigeon, a figure of unusual interest. The pearl which forms the body is a large hemisphere of great beauty. It stands boldly out from the shell, as will be seen in the illustration.

Each one of these shells, thus decorated, is a unique gem of beauty, with its many-colored rays of glowing light as a background, and a magnificent, irregularly shaped pearl constitutes the central part of every picture. They were all painted by the most renowned artists abroad.

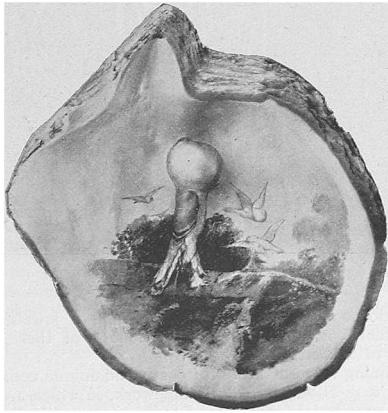
If our readers will closely examine the photograph of the pearl cabinet illustrated they will discover the minute figure of a cat therein. This object is composed of a huge pearl of the



"TWO CORNERS OF THE PARLOR ARE OCCUPIED WITH CORNER CABINETS, CONTAINING THE MOST UNIQUE AND COSTLY COLLECTION OF PICTURES IN PEARL IN EXISTENCE."

exact shape of the body of a cat seated in repose. The head of the figure is a cluster of diamonds. Anything more brilliant, costly and unique it would be difficult to imagine.

Many of the pictures on the walls are not oil paintings, but are wonderful examples of modern Italian mosaic or intarsia work, the realistic scenes being produced by the deft inlaying of costly marbles in their natural colors.

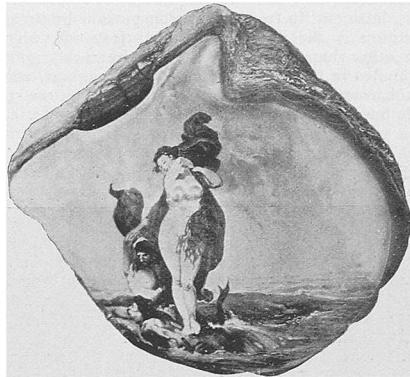


POUTER PIGEON, WITH BODY FORMED OF PEARL.

ARABIAN ROOM.

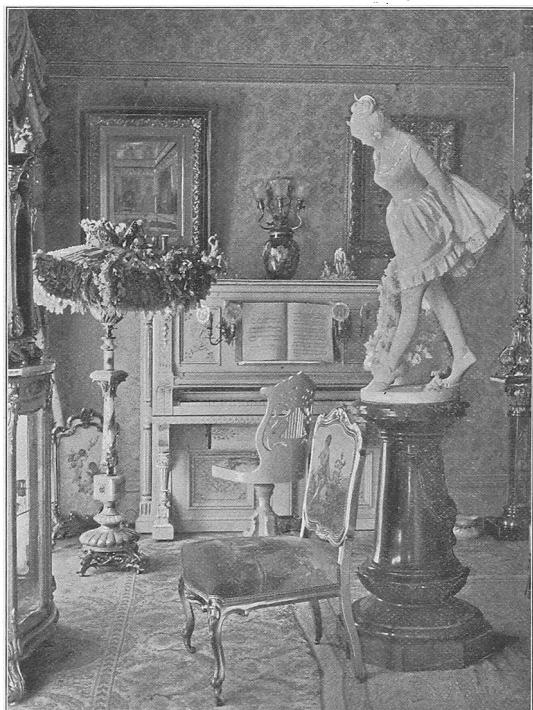
Our illustration of the Arabian room, which communicates directly with the dining room, is reproduced directly from the original design of the decorative scheme. The general color

scheme is a brilliant combination of reds and yellows, relieved with greens and purples. The apartment is decorated after the manner of an Arabian tent, which certainly affords a great relief to the eye, when surfeited with the splendor of orthodox Occidental belongings. There is in the human heart an inextinguishable appetite for variety, and the most sumptuous surroundings in any given style will in time become mono-



VENUS, WITH BREASTS OF PEARL, BORNE ON THE SEA BY TRITONS.

nous. Here the tent of the nomad, the movable lair of the wandering Arab, furnishes the decorative idea of the apartment under consideration. The upright standard in the center of the room represents the pole of the tent, which is here richly decorated at the top with a number of brackets after the manner of the capital of a pillar. This woodwork is painted a soft green, and from the ends of the brackets are suspended a couple of



"WE PRESENT A FINE VIEW OF THE MARBLE STATUE OF THE BALLET GIRL, SHOWING THE WHITE AND GOLD PIANO IN THE BACKGROUND."

Moorish lamps. The top of the pole supports a canopy of cloth in stripes of red and yellow, and the divan, which occupies the entire side of the room, is deftly draped with a similar material forming a canopy for the couch beneath, which is upholstered with finely woven Oriental rugs. The remaining walls of the apartment are appropriately decorated with panels of woven tapestry.

The scheme is one that calls for the exclusive use of drapery materials, lattice or fretwork being conspicuous by its absence.

Everything in the line of moldings, fretwork, whether of wood or other materials possessing architectural rigidity, has been excluded in favor of soft negligee belongings, which are more in harmony with the habits of a man when the strain of the day's business has been suspended.

DINING ROOM.

The dining room gives an impression of solid and stately ele-

in the center of each window. The walls are covered with a richly embroidered old rose stuff, showing a conventionalized figure with floral appendages, there being a richly decorated dado, in plastic relief, finished in old gold bronze.

One of the choicest effects in the dining room is the large corner china cabinet in polished walnut, surmounted by a carved representation of the American shield and eagle. This cabinet contains the choicest examples of *Porcelaine à La Reine* of Theo. Haviland & Cie., and Royal Berlin, Royal Dresden, Crown Derby, Minton and Coalport porcelains, together with many of the rarest models of Bohemian and Venetian glass. The six crystal shelves are laden with wonderful creations, and there is concealed behind the framework of the cabinet a line of incandescent lights, which, when aglow, render the interior one of the most brilliant scenes imaginable. The many points of light, reflected and refracted by the translucent glass and vitrified porcelains, become a glowing focus of prismatic light, a scene



"THE DINING ROOM GIVES AN IMPRESSION OF SOLID AND STATELY ELEGANCE, THE FURNITURE BEING IN AMERICAN WALNUT."

gance, by reason of its somewhat somber yet richly-carved furniture, and the rich, yet quiet, colorings used in the decoration of the walls and carpets. The furniture is composed of American walnut, and as will be seen from our general view of the apartment, the belongings are of the most costly description. An imposing sideboard of fine architectural proportions possesses several mirrored panels in its richly carved wood-work, and is resplendent with a rich array of silver plate and other belongings of the festive board. There is shown a three-leaved screen with oil-painted panels, representing youthful subjects. This conceals the doorway leading to the butler's pantry, and beyond is seen the large bay window, magnificently draped, having evergreen shrubs growing in jardinières placed

of kaleidoscopic splendor. No collection of jewels, however magnificent, can equal the serene splendor of these priceless trophies of industrial art.

The dining room mantel is of costly and unique construction, the over mantel being a solid framework, in which are set several pictorial panels, which are fine specimens of Italian mosaic work, each picture being realistically developed by a most artistic handling of colored marbles. The various subjects are by the renowned artist, E. Laschi, of Rome.

THE BATHROOM.

The bathroom is a picture of luxury in its pleasantest form. The walls are composed of decorated enameled tiles of a soft



"THE CENTER OF ATTRACTION IN THE BATHROOM IS AN EXQUISITE STATUE OF A BATHER, ENTITLED 'THE SURPRISE.'"

pink tint, with a marble dado. There is a unique and magnificent frieze, consisting of garlands of roses wrought in solid silver, the center of each flower being an incandescent light inclosed in opaque glass. The lights of the frieze furnish the only light used in the apartment, and our photographic artist has made a picture of the interior with the lights aglow by means of an non-halation plate. The effect is gorgeous in the extreme. The walls reflect the rosy light in all directions, and the entire bathroom is bathed in a soft, roseate effulgence, and the white marble statue of the surprised bathing girl seems to feel the gladness of the warmth and color of the surrounding atmosphere. The porcelain bath tub has the outer surface decorated with linspar relief in pink and gold. The various appointments of the bath are of the most costly description. There is an oval cheval glass, consisting of beveled mirror, that swings in a silver bronze frame. The sponge repose in a handsome silver basin. There are silver soap dishes and unguent boxes, glass bottles with silver tops, silver-plated pipes and faucets, with the usual inventory of flesh brushes, towels and bath robes. There is also a needle spray bath inclosed in a screen of marble, and at the distant side of the room, as shown in the illustration, is a porcelain wash basin, with silver-plated fittings. The center of attraction is, of course, the exquisite marble statue of a female bather, entitled "The Surprise," chiseled by the Italian sculptor, A. Frille. We have photographed this masterpiece in the attitude of admiring herself in the mirror, and we are sure our readers will thank us for giving them a glance into so fine a *fin de siècle* bathroom.

BEDROOM.

The bedroom is an elegant retreat, the principal feature of which is the canopy ceiling constructed of closely pleated cream satin, radiating from the center to all four walls. Incandescent lights, inclosed in elongated cut-glass globes, hang from the center of the ceiling, and from each of the four corners thereof.

There is an elegant dado of the same satin as that covering the ceiling, running around the walls, the upper portion of which is covered with a silk brocade, having a trailing floral

pattern. The furniture, which consists of a richly carved bed and bureau, with chairs to match, is finished in cream and gold, which bestows an impression of delicate gayety as well as luxurious comfort. A soft Wilton rug, of which the prevailing tone is a deep ecru, completes the housings of the apartment.

The above brief description of what we consider the finest suite of bachelor apartments in the country by no means attempts to describe one-half of the treasures possessed by Mr. Kessler; but from the quality of those described and illustrated, the reader can obtain a satisfactory idea of the whole. There are many fine busts and statuettes in marble, fine bronzes and bric-à-brac, stowed away in corners of the apartments, that are apt to be overlooked amid the general wealth of the more important furnishings. In addition to the pictures in marble mosaic already mentioned, there are quite a number of costly oil paintings, among which a painting, representing a couple of Eastern beauties gracefully poised in a voluptuous dance, is one of rare value.

We have also overlooked many of the more important furnishings, such as the draperies, which are made of the most costly silk velvets, laces, and the frescoed ceiling decorations. The parlor ceiling has a fine hand-painted, oval panel representing flying cupids' flowers, and sky effects, while that of the dining room is a series of panels, some of which have decorative landscapes in subdued colors.

The apartments as a whole happily lack those many eccentricities of individual caprice with which many people seek to astonish their friends, which have no connection with what is true decorative art. Ignoring the dictates of any current art craze, their decoration is masculine, both in breadth and graciousness, and has little to do with the effeminacy and weakness that characterizes the haphazard creations of those who lack artistic education.

Mr. George A. Kessler, the master of the establishment, is still a young man, and is a fine type of New York's self-made men. He is a pleasant, courteous gentleman, a thorough-going man in business affairs, and enjoys the fullest confidence of a wide circle of personal friends, as well as those with whom he has business transactions.



"THE BEDROOM HAS A CANOPY CEILING CONSTRUCTED OF CLOSELY PLEATED CREAM SATIN."